

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) today hailed passage of the Children's Health and Medicare Protection Act "CHAMP" ACT (HR 3162) to reauthorize the successful State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and protect Medicare for America's seniors. The program currently covers 136,000 children in the State of Maryland. The CHAMP Act provides essential funding for the State to reach the 68,000 children who are eligible but remain uninsured.

"I am proud to support the CHAMP Act to provide healthcare for millions of uninsured children and improve and protect Medicare services for older Americans," said Rep. Hoyer. "This historic legislation makes great progress in addressing the nation's monumental healthcare challenges by building on the successes of the State Children's Health Insurance Program to invest in the future of millions of children who lack access to basic health care. Furthermore, it helps meet our obligation to our seniors by strengthening Medicare and extending the solvency of this critical program for another three years."

Since it was enacted in 1997, the SCHIP has enabled millions of uninsured children across the nation to receive the medical care they need. Despite its success, the program currently lacks the resources to fulfill its goal, leaving millions of eligible children across the country uninsured. Under the CHAMP Act, 11 million American children – six million who currently are covered under SCHIP and an additional five million who currently lack health insurance – will have access to quality, affordable health insurance.

The House CHAMP Act also addresses the gaping hole in children's health coverage with a dental guarantee that includes preventative care and parental education about the need for regular screenings. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that dental disease is the single most common chronic childhood disease in the country. Yet, dental coverage under SCHIP varies from state to state, and even in states that provide dental services, such as Maryland, too few dentists participate.

"Not long ago, we were reminded of the devastating and sometimes deadly consequences that can result when children are denied basic health services with the tragic yet preventable death of 12-year old Deamonte Driver from Prince George's County. Forty dollars' worth of dental care could have saved his life, but Deamonte was poor and homeless and did not have access to a dentist. This tragedy, right in our own community, is a stark reminder of what is at stake and underscores why it is so critical to address the healthcare needs of our children," said Rep. Hoyer, who worked with other members of the Maryland delegation to ensure the inclusion of a comprehensive dental benefit.

The CHAMP Act also includes provisions to strengthen Medicare, control out of pocket costs for seniors, and help ensure seniors have access to the doctors of their choice by halting a scheduled 10 percent payment cut to doctors. Additionally, the legislation ends massive overpayments to private health organizations and makes a series of preventative screenings free for Medicare beneficiaries. New free preventative benefits under Medicare provided under the CHAMP Act include: diabetes screening tests; screening for glaucoma; an initial preventive physical; examination; bone mass measurement; prostate cancer screening tests; colorectal cancer screening tests; mammography screening, and; pap smear screening.

“The CHAMP Act improves Medicare by, among other things, providing new preventive benefits and expanding programs that assist low-income seniors with out-of-pocket costs,” added Rep. Hoyer. “Under this legislation, more seniors will be able to see the doctors they trust and receive the care they need.”

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